



AROUND *the* HOUSE A NEWSLETTER FOR HOMEOWNERS & HOMEBUYERS

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PHFA to participate in new housing counseling program

NeighborWorks America has designed and will administer a new program called the “Housing Stability Counseling Program” (HSCP) that aims to help eligible nonprofits and agencies that provide direct counseling services to individuals and families facing housing instabilities. Examples of these vulnerabilities include eviction, foreclosure and homelessness. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 has provided \$100 million in funding to NeighborWorks America to assist and support housing counseling programs across the country.



HSCP will increase the capacity of HUD-approved housing counseling organizations to provide an increased level of counseling for those facing housing instability. The PHFA Housing Counseling Division was awarded funds under this program and currently has 41 counseling agencies in its network that will participate in HSCP. PHFA’s housing counselors are ready to assist consumers with foreclosure and eviction prevention and provide access to the appropriate federal and local relief programs. Many counseling services are free because PHFA underwrites their cost.

Housing counselors are key to helping consumers increase awareness regarding all housing options that are available to them. NeighborWorks America’s mission is to create opportunities for people to live in affordable homes, improve their lives and strengthen their communities. HSCP is a demonstration of their deep commitment to this goal.

For more information or to locate a housing counseling agency in the PHFA network near you, please visit: <https://www.phfa.org/counseling/homebuyers.aspx> and <https://www.phfa.org/counseling/homeowners.aspx>.

Handy Hank Says...

Ask Hank your home maintenance questions



THIS ISSUE: Hank, is there anything I can do to be sure my air conditioner is working its best for the hot summer months ahead?

HANK: There are a few things you can do to make sure your AC is working efficiently.

- Make sure your thermostat has enough power. Some thermostats run on battery power. If the batteries are running low, it can result in irregular input to your system causing an uptick in power consumption.
- You’ll also want to be sure your AC filter is clean to allow air to flow unobstructed. Inspect the filter and replace if needed. Filters are inexpensive.
- Inspect the blower to be sure it’s clean. The blower propels the chilled air through the ducts. Dust can accumulate on the fan, lowering efficiency and air quality. If you see there’s dust buildup, call a professional to clean the blower.

JUNE IS NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH!

You’ve done it! You’ve just closed on your first home, and now you want to make it your own. New furniture, appliances, tools, yard equipment, and a grill. Yes, can’t forget the grill. You want to get shopping, especially because of the flood of offers for new credit!

(Cont’d)

Time to put on the brakes. Now that you have a mortgage loan, you may see an increase in new credit card offers. Qualifying for a mortgage loan isn't easy, so lenders may see you as a good credit risk. Now that you have a mortgage, you need to be even more cautious taking on new credit. Remember those debt-to-income ratios needed to qualify for your mortgage? It's even more important to maintain manageable levels of debt. So how can you get everything you want? Make a plan!

1. Make a list of needs versus wants and set priorities. You may not like the yellow stove included in the purchase, but if it's functional, there is no immediate need to replace it. If you need to buy a stove, look for a used one.
2. Set a budget. Give yourself some time to adjust to new seasonal utility expenses, maintenance, maybe increased commuting costs, etc. Any increased expenses may affect your ability to continue saving or the affordability of any new debt. Make your mortgage loan payments a priority.
3. Find alternatives to cosmetic repairs. Paint the kitchen cabinets or old furniture, use area rugs to cover old carpet or floors, use slipcovers for furniture, and repurpose as many household items you can.
4. If you can, do it yourself if you're comfortable with that. The internet is full of how-to videos, but know your limits. Seek out classes at home supply stores or home and garden centers. But if you're not comfortable, then certainly shop around and hire a professional.

Making your home your own is exciting and rewarding, but you don't have to do it all at once. Having a mortgage loan payment is a big responsibility, and it's important to maintain good money management to meet this obligation. Taking on too much debt or draining savings can have a long-term affect on your homeownership, but if you make and follow a plan, your home will become yours in no time.

Help your home recover from winter with a little spring maintenance

- ✓ Inspect your roof for any leaks or loose shingles or metal. Freezing and thawing can create splits or cracks.
- ✓ After fixing any leaks in the roof, fix any ceiling stains caused by the leak(s).
- ✓ Inspect your windows and doors for bent or broken hinges, frames, or edges. Repair or replace if there's any damage. Also check screens for holes and make any needed repairs before you swap out your storm panels.
- ✓ You may want to consider resealing your driveway if there are a lot of cracks. Resealing will help prevent any further cracking.
- ✓ Decks need to be sealed every couple of years. If your deck is looking worn, have it pressure washed and resealed.
- ✓ Repair or replace any loose slats or rot on any fencing. Use epoxy to patch any worn wood.
- ✓ Clean gutters and downspouts. Call a professional if you're not comfortable doing it on your own.
- ✓ Apply exterior caulk to leak-prone areas like windows and areas of siding where walls join together.
- ✓ Inspect outside faucets and hoses. Turn them on to ensure water is still running as it should. If you can stop the flow with your thumb, the water pressure may be too low and you may have a pipe inside your home that needs to be fixed.

Following these few maintenance tips will help keep your home in tip-top shape and ready to enjoy the summer.



Need help with housing?

Assistance is a call or a click away!

PHFA Customer Solutions Center • 1-855-U-Are-Home (827-3466)

Mon - Fri 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Or e-mail your questions to: AskPHFA@PHFA.org

